

REMARKS

Claims 12-30 and 34-44 are pending in this application. Claims 12, 22, 28, and 34 are rejected; and claims 11-21, 23-27, 29-30, and 35-44 are objected to. Claims 12, 22, and 28 are amended hereby.

Responsive to the rejection of claim 12 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, Applicants have amended claim 12. This is supported by the Specification as a whole, and particularly by the following provisions: page 3, lines 19-21; page 4, lines 5-6; page 5, line 22 to page 6, line 12; page 7, lines 25-28; page 11, lines 7-9, 11-15; page 12, line 14-page 13, line 1. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 12 is now in condition for allowance.

Responsive to the rejection of claims 22, 28, and 34 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, Applicants have amended claims 22 and 28 and respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 34. Regarding claim 22, Applicants have amended claim 22 as shown above. Regarding claim 28, Applicants have amended claim 28, but Applicants state that this amendment is not intended to prevent any overlap between the alternatives provided in claim 28. Regarding claim 34, the Office Action at page 3 states that “it is not clear when the needling is done in the process”. Applicants submit that the sequence of the steps is open and need not be provided in the claims to be a definite claim. Further, Applicants submit that the needling of the batt to a base cloth can be done before or after the applying step, between the applying and activating steps, or after the activating step. Further, Applicants note that Example 1 on page 10 of the present application indicates that the batt is needled to the base cloth before applying the particulate dispersion to the batt. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 22, 28, and 34 are now in condition for allowance.

Responsive to the possible reinstatement of the rejection of claims 12-26, 34-41, and 43-44 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,847,116 (Dutt ‘116),

Applicants have amended claim 12. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claim 12, and claims 13-44 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance.

Dutt '116 discloses a method of producing a composite wet-press papermakers felt by which one side of a textile base fabric can be given a uniform, smooth coating of polymeric resin particles fused together to provide a porous, elastic surface. A homogeneous foam, composed of resin particles, a binder material, and a solvent is applied to the textile base fabric in a uniformly thick coating. The textile base fabric is then subjected to heat, which evaporates the solvent and fuses the resin particles to each other and to the fabric base. (Abstract).

In contrast, claim 12, as amended, recites in part "applying a dispersion of particulate polymeric material to a batt of fibres, thermally activating the dispersion of particulate polymeric material and thereby softening the particulate polymeric material such that the particulate polymeric material undergoes at least partial flow and fuses to itself and to the batt of fibres; wherein the activated dispersion of particulate polymeric material results in a layer which forms the surface of the industrial fabric and which includes the activated dispersion of particulate polymeric material extending vertically within the batt of fibres." (Emphasis added). Applicant submits that such an invention is not taught, disclosed, or suggested by Dutt '116.

Applicants support the amendment to claim 12 by making two primary arguments. First, Dutt '116 provides that the resinous particle structure forms the surface of the fabric (column 2, lines 50-68; column 4, lines 5-19) and that the particles of polymeric resin are fused to each other and to base fabric 1 (column 4, lines 11-12). But, Dutt '116 teaches away from extending the resinous particle structure vertically within the base fabric. For instance, Dutt '116 states as follows: "One of the critical parameters with regard to the homogeneous foam is its viscosity, which must be of a degree that bleed through the fabric structure can be avoided. In this way, all of the polymeric particulate material will be retained on the surface of the fabric."

Second, Dutt '116 provides that the resinous particles are distributed onto a base fabric of a press felt. This is not understood to include a fiber batt. Indeed, Dutt '116 indicates that the base fabric is an alternative to a batt-on-base press felt when it states that "there are alternatives available for use instead of the popular batt-on-base press felts" (column 2, lines 27-28) and then states that "it has proven difficult to apply the resin particles in a manner that will leave them uniformly and evenly distributed on the surface of the base fabric. The present invention is addressed to solving that problem" (column 2, lines 34-38). Thus, Applicants submit that Dutt '116 teaches away from providing resinous particles on a fiber batt.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claim 12, and claims 13-44 depending therefrom, are now in condition for allowance, which is hereby respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the pending claims are definite and do particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Moreover, Applicants submit that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicants have overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicants hereby conditionally petition therefor and authorize that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,

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